

For Mrs. Sarah ~~Skinner~~
Nov. 27. 1740.

Mr. Foxcroft's
S E R M O N
UPON
Evangelic Preaching.

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Some seasonable Thoughts on EVANGELIC
Preaching ; its Nature, Usefulness,
and Obligation.

A

S E R M O N

Deliver'd (in Part) at the

Old-Church-Lecture in Boston, Thursday, Oct. 23. 1740.

To a numerous Audience.

OCCASION'D

By the late Visit, and uncommon Labours, in *daily* and
powerful Preaching, of the Rev. Mr. WHITEFIELD.

---*The Brother, whose Praise is in the
Gospel, throughout all the Churches.*

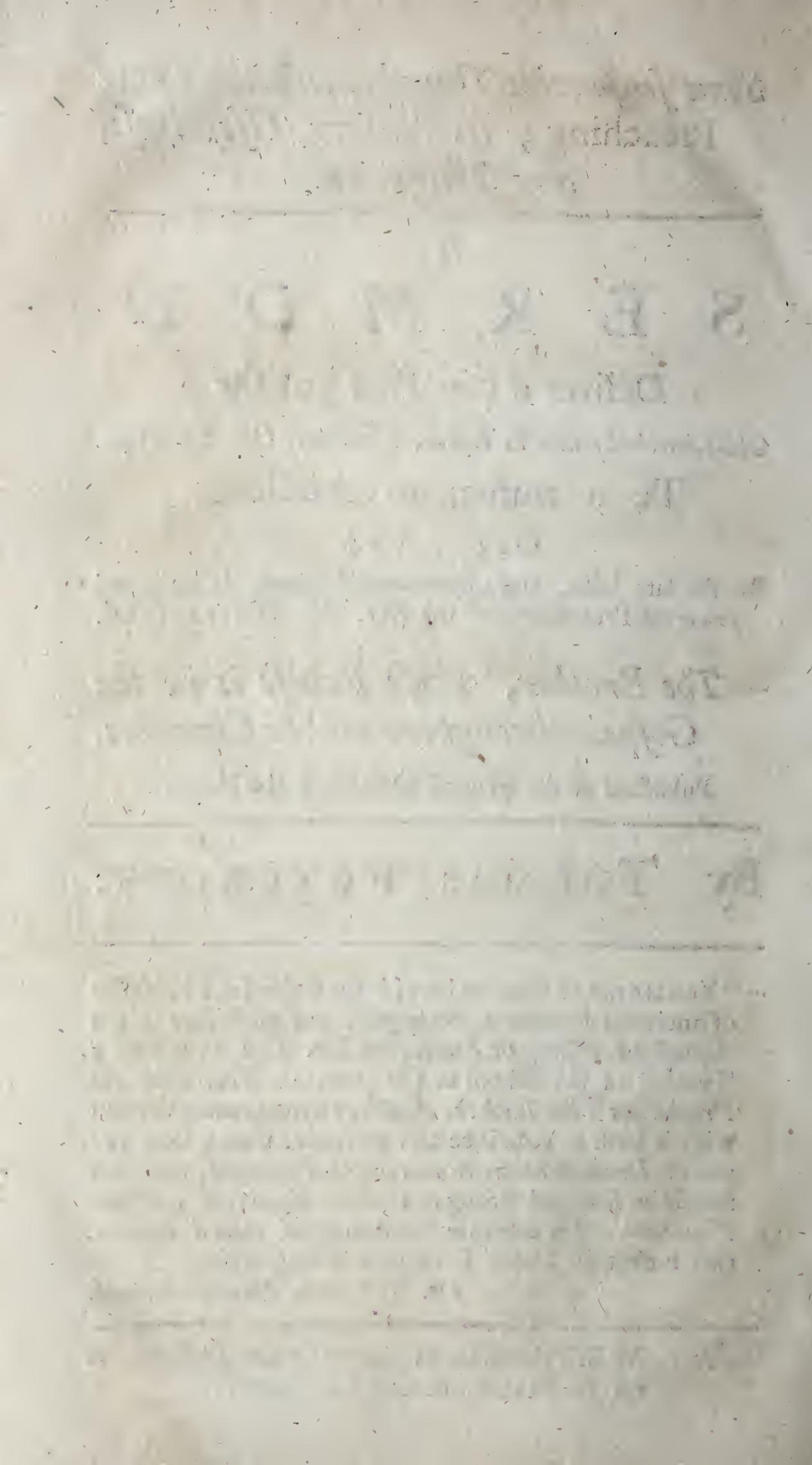
Published at the general Motion of the Hearers.

By THOMAS FOXCROFT.

--"You are not to stand up here [*in the Pulpit*] as a Professor of ancient or modern *Philosophy*, nor an Usher in the School of *Plato*, or *Seneca*, or Mr. *Lock* : but as a Teacher in the School of CHRIST.---- *Thus saith the Prophet*, or *Thus saith the Apostle*, carries greater Weight with it both to convince and persuade, than a long Series of *Demonstrations* from remote *Principles*, tho' they should be firm and strong as those of *Euclid*, or Sir Isaac *Newton*.--- 'Tis the vain Exaltation of *ruin'd Nature*, that makes the *Gospel* so despis'd in our Age.

Dr. WATTS, *Humble Attempt.*

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SOME

Seasonable Thoughts

UPON

EVANGELIC Preaching.



ACTS XXVIII. 31.

Preaching the Kingdom of God, and
teaching those Things which concern
the Lord Jesus Christ, with all Con-
fidence ; no Man forbidding him.

THE inspir'd Evangelist closes his entertain-
ing Narrative of the *Acts of the Apostles*
with this remarkable and instructive Pas-
sage in the Story of the great *Doctor of*
the Gentiles : who, from a Destroyer of
the Faith and Persecutor of Christ, had
long since, by the Grace of God bestowed upon him,
become an Apostle of Christ, and Preacher of the Faith,
yea a Sufferer for the Gospel ; and was now evangelizing
the famous City of *Rome*.

It had been foretold him in a Vision, that as he had testified of Christ at *Jerusalem*, he should bear Witness at *Rome* also. He had himself promis'd; and once and again purpos'd a Visit to the *Romans*; longing to have some *Fruit among them*, even as among other *Gentiles*. But being oblig'd to delay for a while, it seems as if some had tax'd him of *using Lightness*, in promising and not performing; or we may suppose they might (like some at *Corinth*) be puffed up, as though he would not come to them, either for Fear or Shame. Therefore he takes Occasion in his *Epistle to the Romans* (written while yet unknown by Face unto them) to make those solemn Protestations: *I am a Debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the Wise and to the Unwise; so, as much as in me is, I am READY to preach the Gospel to You that are at Rome also: for I am NOT ASHAMED of the Gospel of Christ.* --- From *Jerusalem* and round about unto *Illyricum*, I have FULLY preached the *Gospel of Christ*. And I am SURE, that when I come unto You, I shall come in the FULNESS of the Blessing of the *Gospel of Christ*.

Agreably the Apostle was no sooner arrived among them, altho' under some uncomfortable Restraints and manifest Disadvantages, but he enters with Alacrity into this new Scene of Labours in the Word, shewing himself (as he had wrote) not ashamed of the *Gospel of Christ*, but ready to preach it even at *Rome*; neither regarding the Envy of any judaizing false Brethren of his own Communion there, nor the Malice of the unbelieving Jews; neither fearing the Power of pagan Idolaters, nor all the Sophistry of the Disputers of this World. Flesh and Blood indeed, had he consulted that, might have prompted him to Silence, as a prudent Caution, and the best Security, in his present critical Situation; being under a judicial Prosecution by his own Countrymen, condemned by the Jewish Priests as violating their Law and the Customs of their Fathers, and upon his Appeal to *Cesar* consign'd over into the Hands of the *Romans*. --- But our christian Hero, at all Hazards, quickly begins his Testimony in *Rome*: and ceased not daily to teach and preach *Jesus Christ*. He had too

active

active & Genius, and too just-a Sense of the Worth of Time, to sweep away any of his precious Hours in Sloth and Indolence ; He had a most sensible Compassion for guilty perishing Souls, and he felt the Love of Christ powerfully constraining him ; Necessity was laid upon him ; and he found the Spirit of Glory and of God now resting on him : So that, thus principl'd, thus fortify'd and animated, he apply'd himself to the Work of an Apostle without Delay, and pursued it with a steady Resolution, with ardent Zeal, and an indefatigable Industry ; being in it sometimes from Morning till Evening, and continually in Labours more abundant. From Rome he seems to have wrote almost all his Epistles. And here he seems to have eminently devoted himself to the Ministry of the Word : *preaching and teaching with all Confidence* ; and indeed no Man forbidding him.

Liberty was indulg'd him by the Authority of the Place: And tho' he wanted not for Adversaries, they wanted the Courage or the Power to forbid and withstand him. Particularly the Men of his own Nation, who seem every where to have distinguished themselves for their Spleen and Rancour against this Apostle, and often had made Uproar, and Insurrection, and Conspiracy against him in his own Country, wou'd doubtless now also at Rome, if their Power had been equal to their Will, have thunder'd out Menaces and Prohibitions, and laid all possible Obstructions in the Way, to prevent his speaking in the Name of Jesus, or his preaching among the Gentiles. But Paul, a Prisoner of Jesus Christ, and a Stranger at Rome, happily found more Indulgence here, than at Jerusalem ; being by the Favour of the Roman Captain suffered to dwell by himself (with a single Attendant) in his own hired House, to admit what Company he pleas'd, to preach as often as he would ; and none permitted to disturb him.

[By the Way, here's a teaching Example to Men in Power, to countenance faithful Preachers of the Gospel : and how can persecuting Rome at this Day, reflect on it without Blushing and Confusion !]

This Liberty afforded the Apostle a glorious Opportunity : which he well knew how to value, and neglected not to make Use of to the best Advantage. A wide

wide Door, and effectual, was here open'd to him, to send abroad the Sound of the Gospel : he quickly filled *Rome* with this Doctrine, and it reach'd even *Cæsar's Household*. Some of all Stations, Characters, and Circumstances (it seems) crowded to his Ministry, as tho Doves flock to their Windows : And 'tis said here, like his Divine Master, *he receiv'd all that came to him*; whether Jew or Gentile, whether Male or Female, Old or Young, Bond or Free, Wise or Unwise : he regarded no Man's Person ; he received all indifferently, without partial Respects or Disrepects, for their Nation, Condition, Rank, or Figure in the World. And how did he receive them ? Was it only to good Fellowship, to pass away the Time together in empty Chatt and trifling Amusements ! No.--- Or was it to doubtful Disputations, to scholastick Babblings, and Oppositions of Science, falsely so call'd ! No. --- Or was it to mercenary and selfish Ends, hoping for Money, or for Favour from 'em ! No, nor this. But it was in pure Love, from a generous and disinterested Zeal for their Good, hoping to win their Souls to Christ, and bring them to God. With this noble View he received them all. All that had Ears to hear, He receiv'd, to preach to them, and to teach them, as Jesus (it's said) received the People, and spake to them of the Kingdom of God. And this he did with great Fidelity, Freedom and Assurance ; not ashain'd of his Doctrine, nor balking the Truth ; not sparing Vice, Error, or any Thing contrary to sound Doctrine ; neither flatterying the Vanity of the Great or Learned, nor despising the humble Condition of the Poor, or Illiterate. That's the Character of this Divine Apostle, in our Text ; *Preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all Confidence.*

We may more particularly observe here,

1. The Matter of his Preaching and Teaching, viz. *The KINGDOM of GOD, and the Things which concern the Lord JESUS CHRIST.*--- Not the Wisdom of this World ; not the Philosophy of the Greeks ; nor yet the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. --- Not the Rituals of Moses, or Traditions of the Fathers, to humour his

his *Jewish Brethren*; --- Not human *Politicks*, to please the Court; --- Not liberal *Arts and Sciences*, to tickle the Scholars itching Ears; --- Not mere *Ethicks*, or natural Religion, to gratify the heathen Moralists: No, but the important Truths and Precepts of the Gospel-Revelation, *The Kingdom of God, and the Things concerning Jesus Christ*. These momentous and sublime Subjects were the reigning Themes of his publick Ministry and private Converse. *On these two Arguments hang all the Law and the Prophets, the Gospel and the Apostles.* Here's the Centre of Revelation: Here's the Sum of Christianity: And here's an inexhaustible Fund of the most useful Preaching and Conversation. These are Things that Angels are Students in; but not able fully to comprehend.

Observe,

2. The Manner of his Preaching and Teaching, viz.
with all CONFIDENCE.

A Door was now open'd to him of the Lord; a Door of Opportunity, and a Door of Utterance: and he spake boldly the Mysteries of God. Sometimes he remarks it to the Churches, that he had been with them in Weakness, and in Fear, and in much Trembling: tho' never to that Degree as to hinder him from declaring to them the Testimony of God, and triumphing in Christ. It seems, even inspir'd Apostles had not the Presence of the Comforter with them always in an exact Proportion. But in some Places, and on some Occasions, they had the Joy of the Holy Ghost in signal Measures, so that at such times they remarkably waxed bold: and never perhaps was Paul more thorowly made manifest, than among the Romans. His Speech and his Preaching was now very eminently in Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power. His Faith seems now triumphant, and to spread all its Glories upon him. He needed a peculiar Presence of God, to support him under the Weight of that uncommon Service (private, as well as publick) which he must have upon his Hands in so great and populous a City, while all Comers at all Seasons had free Access to him.---- Here too he had some of the most subtle and powerful Adversaries, to conflict with; Here he had his Martyrdom in the nearest Prospect; and here one of the bitterest Trials was to befall

him, the *Desertion of Friends*: on all which Accounts, as he remarkably needed his *Lord to stand by him, and strengthen him*, so he had now a very remarkable Experience of the gracious Presence of Christ, which gave him Utterance and a Fortitude extraordinary. So that even in learned proud and imperious *Rome* he was bold in his God, to make known the Mysteries of the Gospel; and preach'd Christianity with much Power, with a victorious Faith, and intrepid Assurance. He preach'd the *Kingdom of God*, tho' amidst *Idol-Temples*, and near the Palace of *Cesar*, as jealous as he was for the Dignity of his Crown, or the Priests and Populace for the Honour of their Idols. The Apostle, while he was for allowing to *Cesar* the Things that were *Cesar's*, yet boldly claim'd for GOD the Things that are GOD's, and for CHRIST the Things that are CHRIST's, in Opposition to the Works of the Devil, and the Usurpations of Men. He dur'd preach the *Kingdom of God* in the *Imperial City*, the Mistress of the World, and the Mother of Abominations. And here he triumph'd in *Christ*, tho' despised of Men. He glory'd in the *Cross of Christ*, though to the Jews a Stumbling-block, and to the Greeks Foolishness. They might pour Contempt on the Doctrine of a *crucify'd Saviour*, and a *Kingdom not of this World*: but he saw a Divine Glory in the Gospel, and counting all Things but Loss, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Jesus, he preach'd the *Things concerning Christ, and the Kingdom of God*, with all Confidence, with the full Assurance of Faith, and the Rejoicing of Hope firm to the End; free from all anxious Diffidence, Reluctance, Fear, or Shame; and surmounting all Discouragements.

Perhaps (by the Way) this his heroic Confidence might be one Occasion of that happy Circumstance, No Man forbidding him: for they might as well attempt to stay the Sun in the Heavens from its Course, as go about to forbid the Progress of this bold and zealous Preacher in his Work, who like the Sun was a burning and shining Light, and in the daily Revolutions of his Ministry went forth in the Strength of the Lord, rejoicing as a strong Man to run a Race. But the good Hand of his God upon him, is principally to be ey'd in this remarkable Con-

Concurrence of Events ; the Boldness of the Apostle, and the Tameness of his Adversaries. The God that stopt the Mouths of ravening Lions, in the Case of *Daniel*, made all Iniquity to stop her Mouth, in the Case of this Apostle, and *delivered him out of the Mouth of the Lion*. So it was that God, who maketh Man's Mouth ; even He, who put forth his Hand, and touched *Jeremiah's Mouth* ; He, who sent one of the Seraphim, with a live-Coal from off the Altar, to touch *Isaiah's Lips*, and made his Mouth like a sharp Sword ; 'twas the same Hand of God, that open'd the Mouth of this Apostle, and gave him that good Treasure he had within, of Knowledge, Grace and Comfort, so that out of the Abundance of his Heart, his Mouth spake, *of the Kingdom of God, and the Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all Confidence*.

Having held you thus long in reflecting on the Context, and descanting on the Words, + I shall wave all other Observations that might be made from them, and single out this one for the Theme of our further Meditations.

DOCTRINE.

That Ministers of the Word are to preach the KINGDOM of GOD, and the Things concerning CHRIST, revealed in the Gospel, with all holy Confidence.

The special Occasion, which has led my Tho'ts to this Subject, you are all aware of ; and will expect no other Apology.---In discoursing upon this Doctrine, I shall take the following Method : Premising, that *the Gospel reveals to us the Kingdom of God, and those Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ* ; then shewing, that *Ministers of the Gospel are to preach and teach these Things* ; and this with all holy Confidence. --- To each in their Order, as briefly as will well consist with doing any Justice to Points of such Importance.

+ This long Introduction has sundry Passages in it, which I have taken the Liberty to insert here, though for Brevity omitted in the preaching.--- I've done the like in some of the following Pages.

PROP. I. The Gospel reveals to us *the Kingdom of God and those Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Here it may be said distinctly,

i. The Gospel reveals to us *the Kingdom of God.*

And if it be inquired, *What Kingdom?* I answer,

(1). It reveals to us a Kingdom of *Providence*, which extends thro' the universal *Creation.*

It tells us, that *God hath prepared his Throne in the Heavens, and his Kingdom ruleth over all* : reaches thro' all Worlds, Heaven, Earth, and Hell. The Doctrine of a Divine Providence is the Dictate of Reason, as well as Revelation : tho' the Glories of this Providential Dominion are vail'd to the Eye of natural Reason. It appears but *a base Kingdom*, without the Gospel to shew us the Mysteries of it.--- Nor can we by the Light of Nature learn *the Manner of the Kingdom*, as administered by *Jesus*, the Mediator ; to whom all Power in Heaven and Earth is committed, and who hath the Keys of Hell and of Death. This is one of the *Peculiarities of Revelation* : a Doctrine of Christianity, full of Mystery and Glory, and big with Lessons of Duty.--- But it is not the Kingdom of *Nature*, the Dominion of *Providence*, in any View of it, that our Text has so direct a Reference to.

(2.) The Gospel reveals to us a Kingdom of *Grace*, which extends only to the Church and peculiar People of God in the Earth.

The *Kingdom of God*, spoken of in our Text, and which is so celebrated a Subject in Revelation, means in general the Dispensation of Redemption by Christ ; and particularly that mediatory *Dominion of Grace*, which concerns *Souls in this World*, and which our *Lord-Redeemer* exercises over them by his *Word and Spirit.*

The Metaphor of a *Kingdom* is chosen to shadow out the *Excellencies* of this Dispensation of Grace ; and particularly to represent the glorious Rectitude, the beautiful and blessed State of Things in a *renewed Soul*. It imports a Throne erected, a Divine Authority exercised, and a Divine Power exerted ; a Law written, Allegiance sworn, and Homage paid ; a comely Order and Harmony restored ; a Pardon dispense'd, and Peace spoken ; Privileges

ileges and Honours confer'd ; great and precious Promises apply'd : a vital Union to Christ, the Head of his Body, the Church ; and I may add, an Union of Hearts among all the Subjects of this Kingdom ; and, what crowns all, the Stability of this Dominion and Happiness. For the Foundation of God standeth sure : *The Lord knoweth them that are his.* The Throne of Christ in his People's Hearts shall endure for ever ; and *the Gates of Hell shall not be able to prevail against it.* This Kingdom of Grace in the Soul, is *a Kingdom that cannot be destroyed* : molested it may be, but not dissolv'd.

This is sometimes called the Kingdom, by way of Eminence ; because it is incomparable for true Glory, Happiness, and Duration ; and because this was *that Kingdom*, the diffusive Spread and flourishing State whereof the *Old Testament Prophecies* spake of, upon which the Jews founded their Expectation of the *Kingdom's being restored to Israel*, tho' their Notion of the Thing was all carnal and worldly.

'Tis sometimes call'd the *Heavenly Kingdom* ; because in its Nature it partakes of *Heaven*, and prepares us for it, tends to it, and ends in it.

'Tis call'd in our Text, and elsewhere, the *Kingdom of God* : because it is of a divine *Nature*, and of a divine *Original*, resulting from the Purpose of Divine Grace from everlasting, contriv'd by divine *Wisdom*, effected by Divine *Power*, and exhibiting the Image of Divine *Holiness* ; because the Divine *Sovereignty* is here display'd in its brightest Glory ; because a *Submission* to God is the great Law of this Kingdom, and the *Fruition* of God is the great Reward of its Subjects ; because the *Righteousness*, which is of God by Faith, is the grand Basis of this Kingdom ; the *Word* of God, the Charter of its Privileges ; the *Christ* of God, the Purchaser, and the *Spirit* of God, the Bestower of them : in fine, because this Kingdom stands in direct Opposition to the Kingdom of *Satan*, the god of this World ; is above the Reach of human Usurpation, and infinitely excells all the Kingdoms of the *Sons of Men*.

The *Kingdom* spoken of in our Text, is primarily of a moral spiritual Kind, an inward Thing, in the hidden *Man of the Heart*. It's a *Kingdom not of this World*,

as our Saviour assures us ; not of an earthly and temporal Reference ; not lying in Civils, and mere Externals ; not having Men's natural Lives, Liberties, and Properties in this World, for the immediate Object of its Dominion : No, but it is a Kingdom *within* Men, a Kingdom in the Soul, a Rule over the Understanding and Will, the Heart and Conscience ; rectifying and conducting the Powers of the *inner Man* ; a Kingdom of heavenly Light and Love, and filial Liberty *within* ; a Kingdom that consists (as the Apostle expresses it) *in Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*. ---- It is a Kingdom set up in Honour of God, our Saviour ; that the Son of God may *manifest his Glory*, in destroying the Prince of this World, and that Men may with their *Heart*, as well as Lips, *honour the Son, even as they honour the Father* *.

'Tis to be observ'd, that the Kingdom of Grace may be consider'd as in some Respects under an *outward* and visible, as well as an *inward* and invisible Administration.

By the *Kingdom of God*, sometimes in Scripture seems to be meant the *visible* Kingdom of Christ, or the *external* Administration of his spiritual Government in the Church, mediately by his Word and Ordinances : as where we read of the *Kingdom's* being *taken away* ; the *Children of the Kingdom*, their being *cast out*, &c. --- The *Laws* and *Orders* of this outward Polity are exhibited to us in the sacred Scriptures : The *Subjects* of it are *visible* Saints : One eminent *Sign* or *Badge* of it is the *holy Sabbath* : An *Oath* of Allegiance to the King of Zion is administer'd in *Baptism*, and a *Recognition* of the *Vows* of God upon us solemnly made at the *Lord's Table* : *Societies* for Communion in Worship, Church-Order, and Discipline, are instituted : and *Officers* appointed, with a subordinate ministerial Power, to lead and preside in the *House of the Kingdom* &c. --- Now the *Kingdom of God*, in this Notion of it, we must take

* Having multiply'd Scripture-Quotations in this Discourse, I have for Brevity often omitted citing Book, Chapter and Verse.

on EVANGELIC Preaching. II

Heed that we don't reject, or slight : but acknowlege Christ's kingly Authority in his visible Church and outward Ordinances, by a professed Subjection to the Gospel, and by a Care to walk in all his Commandments and Institutions, blameless. We must make it our Concern and Study, to hold fast the Form of sound Words, and to keep the Ordinances as they have been delivered to us ; confessing Christ before Men, and honouring him by all due Acknowledgements in external Practice. --- It's usual to say, There's the visible Kingdom of God among a People so doing.

We may note here, The Kingdom of God, as to it's external Appearance, Form, or Mode, has pass'd under a Variety of Dispensations, Revolutions and Degrees of Advancement, since its original Foundation. The Kingdom has ever been substantially one ; but administer'd at sundry Times in divers Manners. The last, and present, which is commonly nam'd the *Gospel-Dispensation*, the Kingdom of Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, is the most perfect of all. This was long lookt for by the Jews ; tho' they had wrong Ideas of its Nature and Design. We read of devout Men among them, who waited for the Kingdom of God. And the Pharisees inquir'd the Time, when the Kingdom of God should come ; meaning, when the *Messiah* would inherit the Throne of his Father *David*, and introduce his expected Reign.

It's thought by some, this visible Dispensation of the Gospel is only intended, where Christ says to the unbelieving Pharisees, *No Doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you* ; and concerning the little Children bro't to him, *Of such is the Kingdom of God*. So where the christian Hebrews are said to have received a Kingdom which cannot be moved ; and the Colossians to be delivered from the Power of Darkness, and translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. --- But I can't help thinking, altho' that Sense be comprehended, yet there's a richer and more exalted Sense, which is by no means to be excluded, in the most (if not all) of these, and other such Passages.

If we wou'd speak of the Glory of God's Kingdom, and talk of his Power, we must turn our Eye to the inward and vital Dispensation. The Kingdom of God, consider'd Subjectively, is in its general Notion the same with what

is elsewhere denominated the *New Creature, the Image of God, &c.* It means that System of heavenly Graces, in-wrought in the Soul by the Power of God; in Conversion. And how great is its Beauty and Worth, its Importance and Necessity! The *Externals* of the Kingdom are, in their Order and Place, truly excellent and highly amiable. *His Foundation is in the holy Mountains: The Lord loveth the Gates of Zion, more than all the Dwellings of Jacob: Glorious Things are spoken of thee, O City of God.* But among all its Glories, this is the most remarkable; *Of Zion it shall be said, This and that Man was born in her.*--- What are all the visible Beauties and Benefits of the outward Dispensation, to those of the secret invisible Empire of God, set up in a Soul, in the new BIRTH! *The King's Daughter is all glorious WITHIN.* As for the Glory of external Advantages, it lies in their being Divine Appointments, and wisely adapted Means, own'd and sanctify'd of God, to subserve the blessed Purposes of his Grace, in regard to the *internal Dispensation.* They are a noble *Apparatus & Attendant* to this: but *separate* from this, the *external Frame* of Christianity fails of its genuine Use and End; and in that Regard hath no Glory, however splendid an Appearance it may make. The visible Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace, without the invisible Work of Grace in the Heart; the mere *Form of Godliness*, tho' brighten'd with the fair Shew of all homiletical Virtues, giving Persons or Societies *a Name that they live*; This is certainly but the Shadow, not the Substance and Reality of the *Kingdom of God.* --- Reigning *Hypocrisy* (which is consistent with the Height of external Zeal in Offices of Devotion and Duties of moral Practice) determines Men real Slaves to the *Prince of Darkness*: and we have Reason to fear, many a Church on Earth, that calls it self a Church of Christ, is indeed little else but a *Synagogue of Satan.* However highly they may make their Boast in God and his Kingdom, little more can be said, than that *the Kingdom of God is come nigh them.*--- We may, in regard of Convictions and Reformation, be not far from the *Kingdom of God*; and yet in Fact not receive it. Nevertheless, where there's a truly prosperous State of *Externals* in Religion,

Religion, it's to be hop'd, there is usually the secret Work of Grace carrying on, and so the Kingdom of God in Reality.

Receiving the Kingdom of God, means a vital Application and active Assumption ; most aptly expressing the Nature and Operation of *Faith*, which is a receptive and accepting Grace ; whose Seat is in the *Heart* or *Spirit*, and whose Office is to receive *Christ Jesus the Lord*, our *Righteousness*. --- The Soul of Man is the prime Object of the whole Administration of this Kingdom ; and it is in its whole Genius & Frame spiritual, suited to our immortal Part. --- The Law of this Kingdom is spiritual : I mean the royal Law of Liberty, the Law written, not with Ink, nor in Tables of Stone, but in fleshly Tables of the Heart ; reaching to the inmost Recelles of the Soul, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ. --- The Service of the Kingdom is in its Nature, its Principles and Motives, spiritual : 'Tis a worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth, a serving Him with our Spirit in the Gospel of his Son. --- The Privileges of this Kingdom are spiritual Blessings and heavenly Things in Christ Jesus. 'Tis a Kingdom in this World, but not of it, not derivative from it, nor terminating in it, not participating of it, nor dependent upon it. --- Its Properties, its Effects and Ends, are all sublime and spiritual. --- The distinguishing Character of such as have receiv'd this Kingdom is, They that be spiritual ; spiritually minded, walking in the Spirit, &c. --- Which leads me to observe, The grand Operator, in setting up and advancing this Kingdom, is the blessed Spirit of Grace : He is the immediate Agent, and (strictly speaking) the sole Efficient. Indeed the Apostle sometimes intitles Ministers Fellow-workers to the Kingdom of God : But this is to be understood of their Employment in the external Administration. For they have not, by any Art of their own, an Access to the Hearts of Men ; nor Power, as of themselves, to produce the Kingdom of God within Men. In respect of this Effect, the same Apostle confesses himself Nothing : but glories in his Infirmitie, that the Power of Christ might rest upon him. We have this Treasure (says he) in earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of Men. And

when it pleases God to send forth the Spirit of his Son into our Hearts, exerting his Divine Influences in Concurrence with the Ministry of the Word, it is seen that the King of God is not in Word, but in Power. The holy Ghost with unerring Wisdom & Skill conducts the Affairs of this spiritual Kingdom ; and with uncontroulable Liberty, with an Energy invincible, and overpowering all Opposition, he prosecutes the glorious Designs of it : sets it up in Regeneration, and carries it on in progressive Sanctification. --- But in the whole He acts in Subordination to the Son of God, who is represented as the supreme Trustee of Divine Power, and prime Head of Influences, whom the Father hath set King on his holy Hill of Zion. Unto the SON he saith, Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever : Sit thou at my right Hand, until I make thine Enemies thy Footstool : Thy People shall be willing in the Day of thy Power.

Let it be subjoin'd here ; This is a Kingdom that is daily carrying on among Men, and shall be commensurate in Duration with Earth and Time, yea with Heaven and Eternity. Indeed when the World ends, and the whole Scene of Temporals is shut up, the present Manner of administering this spiritual Dominion will cease : the Mode of Exercise will be alter'd, but the Dominion it self shall have no End, and its Effects never cease. This Kingdom is call'd the EVERLASTING Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He will doubtless be for ever, in some Sense, Head of his own Body, the Church ; 'tis the Reward of his meritorious Passion and Obedience. Yet it's the Opinion of Divines, that the Mediatorial Form of administering the Government will utterly expire ; which they ground on that Text, Then shall the Son deliver up the Kingdom to the Father. Though, this may only mean Christ's presenting to the Father his spiritual Subjects, his peculiar People † (who are describ'd a Royal Priesthood, a Kingdom of Priests) the Church, that he loved, and gave himself for ; the same, it's said, He will present to

† In familiar Language, Kingdom is taken objectively, for the govern'd Community ; as well as formally, for the governing Power and Constitution.

HIMSELF a glorious Church. --- Then most evidently and emphatically God shall be all in all. The whole World of the Redeemed shall be filled with all the communicable Fulness of the Godhead. So the Kingdom of God shall be perfect ; arriv'd at its absolute Completion in Glory, a Glory that will never pass away.

This brings me to say,

(3.) The Gospel reveals to us a Kingdom of Glory, in the future and eternal World.

This Kingdom is administered in Heaven, the Seat of God's glorious Presence, and most beatific Influx. The Gospel acquaints us, that it was prepared from the Foundation of the World ; declares it the Purchase of the Cross of Christ ; makes the Promise of it to them that are in Christ ; pronounces Jesus the Fore-runner, who is for us entred into it, and set down with his Father in his Throne ; proclaims Jesus the final Judge, the Resurrection, and the Life ; in a Word, reveals the incarnate SON of God, as together with the FATHER, and the SPIRIT (One God over all, blessed for ever) the eternal Object of Worship and Happiness to the Saints in Light. Hence these are represented as standing before the Throne of God and the Lamb, reigning with Him Kings and Priests for ever.

But what is the Manner of the Kingdom above, what it's peculiar Laws and Methods of Administration (whether in the present State of separate Souls, or the future Resurrection-State) and what its admirable Immunities, divine Treasures, exalted Honours, Delights, verily Eye hath not seen, neither Ear heard, nor of these Things is the Heart of Man, in this our degenerate and feeble Condition, capable of forming or admitting any exact and adequate Ideas. --- Only the Gospel reveals so much as sufficiently assures us, in the general, it is a Kingdom of infinite Glory, immense Riches, and ecstatick Pleasures without End. --- Enough this, in the Sense of enlighten'd Reason, to draw our Attention, to attract our Desires, and warm our Affections, to excite our Hopes, and engage us in the Pursuit of this Kingdom of God : Enough, to nourish the Saints Faith and Love and spiritual Life, to refresh us in our Pilgrim-State, to ease our Griefs, and silence our Complaints, while under many Burdens, and

through mighty Oppositions, we are walking in the *narrow Way*, which leads to the Kingdom. --- Thus much concerning it we have reveal'd to us, with infallible Certainty: and nothing further was really needful for us at present to know. What of the *Glory* remains to be revealed, we shall know hereafter.

Let it be observ'd now, Thô this State of *Glory* in Heaven be ultimately respected in our Text; yet it's the State of *Grace* here on Earth, that is more immediately in View. *The Kingdom*, thô a *heavenly Kingdom*, thô *not of this World* (neither establish'd on a worldly Design, nor having its Issue in the present World) yet has its Existence and Operation here. --- This spiritual Kingdom has been erected and supported among Mankind *from the Beginning*: taking the Date of its *Projection* from the Days of *Eternity*, but of its actual *Rise* from the Days of our *first Parents*, commencing with that primitive and fundamental Promise made upon their Fall, *That the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's Head*. ---- All along thrô the Patriarchal and Jewish Ages, there was in one Degree or another the *Kingdom of God* among Men. Yet the most illustrious Dispensation of it was reserv'd to be the Distinction of the Church's *last Age*. Says our Lord, *From the Days of John Baptist the Kingdom of God is preached, and every Man presseth into it*. But in the Days of the *Apostles*, after Christ's Ascension, this was eminently the Case. Then was that Saying of our Lord fulfilled, *I tell you there be some standing here, which shall not taste of Death, until they have seen the Kingdom of God come with POWER*. Truly, then was there an extraordinary Display of the Power of God, in a quick Progress of his spiritual Kingdom, in its wide Extent, and in the transcendent Degree of its Prosperity and Glory, as to the Internals, as well as Externals of it. Then Conversions were numerous; *Thousands at a Time added to the Lord; Nations born in a Day*. And the Converts of Zion, in that happy Season, appear to have had the Spirit in eminent Measures. Not to mention their miraculous Gifts, it seems, their heavenly Graces were in general very signally, in a flourishing State; having a Vitality, a sensible Growth & Evidence, beyond what's common. --- O when

shall

shall we see the Return of such triumphant *Days of the Son of Man!* By the Grace of God we have a Prospect of another blessed Period, that will even exceed in Glory : when the everlasting *Gospel* shall fly like Lightning, with resistless Power and astonishing Success ; shall again be preach'd with the *Holy Ghost* sent down from Heaven in a remarkable Manner, and the Kingdom of God be every where diffus'd and establish'd thro all the Earth ; when the *Kingdom and the Greatness of the Kingdom shall be given to the People of the Saints of the most High.* We shou'd pray for the hastning of those glorious Times of Reformation.

In the mean time we have it to acknowlege unto the Praise of a sovereign God, that there is even now a Remnant according to the *Election of Grace*, and a promising Appearance of the Increase of their Number, who have receiv'd the *Kingdom of God*, tho in lower Measures. For this heavenly *Kingdom* as it now exists and appears in Believers, especially in its Beginnings, seems in general comparatively but as a *Grain of Mustard-Seed*, in regard to its small Figure, and at least oftentimes but as *Leaven hid in Meel*, with regard to its secret Operation ; yet there's the Reality, and a gradual Prevalence. Every one that is born of the *Spirit*, does actually see the *Kingdom of God*, in its initial Dispensation. To such it's given to know vitally and experimentally the *Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven*. For it must be noted, that (properly speaking) the *Kingdom of Grace* and the *Kingdom of Glory* are not two Kingdoms, specifically or essentially distinct ; but only differing gradually, [and in respect of their various Modes of Administration : Otherwise, they are for Substance one and the same, and go under the common Name of the *Kingdom of Heaven*. The State of *Grace*, and the State of *Glory*, are not only connected inviolably in the Purpose and Covenant of God, but also nearly related, and united in their general Nature. *Heaven* comes down into the Soul in *Regeneration* ; this is the actual Commencement of heavenly Bliss. The *Kingdom of Grace* is the *Kingdom of Glory* in its inchoate and imperfect Estate. And what's the *Kingdom of Glory*, but the *Kingdom Grace* in its Consummation, its triumphant State, and full display under a varying Form of Administration ?

I shall now close this Point with suggesting a few practical Reflections.

By this we see the *forlorn* and *wretched* State of Souls *unregenerate*, in that they are Strangers to the *Kingdom of God* in this World; and continuing so, must necessarily be excluded the *Kingdom of God* in the next.--- By this we see how *happy* is the Day of a Sinner's *Conversion*, and the Occasion there is for *Joy* at every spiritual *Birth*, when a Soul is initiated into the *Kingdom of God*.--- We see the Reason of believing *Parents* so anxiously *weeping* for their *Children* while in a State of Nature, and *travailing in Birth again*, until *Christ* be formed in them, the *Kingdom of God* set up in their Souls. --- What honourable Sentiments should we have of the *Saints*, thô poor in this World, yet rich in Faith, and Heirs of the *Kingdom*! --- And what mutual *Endearment* ought there ever to subsist between all these! These, who are *Companions in the Kingdom and Patience of Jesus Christ* here, and will hereafter be Companions for ever in the *Kingdom and Joy of their Lord*.--- Let it be added; while we reflect with Grief and Shame on our Apostacy and Fall in *Adam* (by whom came *Sin* into the World, and by this the *Kingdom of the Devil*, that wicked Spirit which rules in the Children of Disobedience ever since) we shou'd admire and magnify the stupendous Wisdom and Grace of God in raising up a *second Adam*, to repair the suffering Honour of his violated Law, to dethrone the Enemy of our Souls, and *restore the Kingdom to Israel*.--- And shou'd we not with equal Wonder and Praise celebrate the infinite *Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*! who hath *restored* that which he took not away, and has done this at the Ex pense of his own precious *Blood*; by the Merit of which he purchased the *Kingdom of God*, and in *Virtue* of which he receiv'd Power, in his risen State, to dispense the heavenly Blessing to whom he will; even to as many as the Father hath given him for a peculiar People to himself. The *Kingdom is the Lord's*; his Property, and at his Dispose. Hence that of Christ to his Disciples, *I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as my Father hath appointed to me a Kingdom*. And we read, *Him hath God exalted with his right Hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance unto Israel, and*

and Remission of Sins : which two Redemption-Blessings are the leading Benefits of the Kingdom of God, the first royal Donatives of our Prince and Saviour. O what Reasons of Adoration and Thanksgiving to Christ do these Reflections present to us ! Shall we not all join in the Cry of the Multitude that followed him at his triumphant Entrance into Jerusalem, saying, *Hosanna ! Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord* : *Blessed be the Kingdom of our Father David, that cometh in the Name of the Lord ; Hosanna in the highest !*

But in many of these Hints I have been insensibly anticipating the proper Thoughts on the other Article before us : which therefore I shall be the briefer upon.

2. The Gospel reveals to us those Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.

By the Light of Reason we have some Notions of the Being and Perfections of God, and his Kingdom of Providence : but the Kingdom of God, intended in our Text, and the Things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ (which do abundantly improve and add to rational Light in the Things of Nature and Providence) are discoverable only by the supernatural Light of Revelation. The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of Grace, constituted and administered according to the Counsel of his own Will : And hence Divine Revelation was necessary to the Knowledge of that. So the Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, are Matters of pure Revelation : such as the natural Reason of Man cou'd never have brought to Light. 'Tis the appropriate Glory of the Gospel, to reveal these Things to the Sons of Men.

And what a rich Variety of Things, great and glorious Things concerning Christ, are discovered to us in the Gospel of his Grace ! The Kingdom of God is a comprehensive Article among those Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ ; and sometimes they seem all to be sum'd up in that. But the Apostle here adds a more extensive Phrase, in order to include all other Things not so evidently couch'd in the Idea of the Kingdom of God. The whole Revelation in sacred Writ, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, is relative to CHRIST, in some Manner and Degree : But our Text eminently points us to those Things which have

a more evident and next Reference to him in the Christian Revelation.

Thus for Instance, the Gospel reveals to us the Person of Christ, as *God manifest in the Flesh*; his Office, as Mediator, under the several Characters of a Prophet, and a Priest, as well as King; the *Covenant of Redemption*, and the Promises made to Him before the World began; the *Predestination* of the *Elect* unto Life in and by him; the *Types & Prophecies* of Him in old Time, and their punctual *Accomplishment* in Him; the *History* and *Mystery* of his Incarnation, Conception and Birth, his Life, Miracles and Sufferings, his Death and Resurrection, his Ascension into Glory, and sitting down at the right Hand of the Majesty in the Heavens; so the *Doctrine* he taught, the Laws and Institutes he made, the Promises he gave, whether in Person, or by his inspir'd Ministers; the Mission of his *Spirit*, as a Teacher, Sanctifier and Comforter; his sovereign Agency, and abiding Presence; the Commission and Inspiration of his *Apostles*, the Revelations made to them, and published by them, their Ministry and Preaching, confirm'd with Signs and Wonders; his setting up of the *Gospel-Church*, demolishing the *Jewish Dispensation*, and visiting the *Gentiles* to take out of them a People for his Name.--- In brief, we have revealed to us the *Example* of Christ; his *Sacrifice* and *Righteousness*, and his *Intercession* in the Merit thereof; the unsearchable Riches of his *Grace*, and the absolute *Sufficiency* of his Power to save; the *Way* of Salvation by him, the *Benefits* we receive from Him, and the *Duties* we owe to Him; his being the *Head* of his Body, the Church, and Head over all Things to the Church; his being appointed the *Heir* of all Things, and *Judge* of the World; his *second Appearance*, his *raising* the Dead, and dispensing both Rewards and Punishments everlasting.--- This is an incomplete and immethodical Abstract of those Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. I pretend not to an exact and perfect Enumeration: much less to a perfect Comprehension of the Meaning of all these Things. But when I meditate them, I soon find my self lost in Wonder, and can't order my Speech by reason of Darkness. *Without Controversy, GREAT is the Mystery of Godliness, the Mystery of Christ,*

Christ, and his Kingdom. Yet all that's necessary to be known by us in our present State, is in the Gospel sufficiently revealed : and as for what transcends our Conception, this however must exercise our Humility, our Faith and Hope, and remain the Subject of our adoring Thoughts.

A R E F L E C T I O N .

O what Reason have we to be thankful for the *Gospel*, which thus reveals to us *the Kingdom of God, and the Things concerning Christ!* --- Well might it be stiled (as it is) *the GLORIOUS Gospel, the GLAD Tidings of the Kingdom of God &c.* --- Surely the Doctrine of *Christ* our Redeemer, and of *the Things which concern him*, must needs carry much of *Glory* in it, that bespeaks our Wonder and Praise. --- The Tidings of a *Kingdom*, the *Kingdom of God*, must be *glad Tidings* indeed ; Tidings of *great Joy* to all People. Shall they not be such to *us* ! to us in our miserable Captivity and hellish Bondage ! Are we for *Neruus* ? here's News worth our hearing, worth our sollicitous Attention, our chearful Belief, and thankful Admiration. When we consider how we deserv'd to hear nothing from God but the Thunders of his Law and Curse ; when we consider the *Mysteries of the Kingdom, & the Things concerning Christ*, their *Excellency* in themselves, and the *Importance* of their Discovery to us ; when we consider how they surpass the most improv'd Lights of human Reason, and what a vast Part of our Fellow-Creatures are left in the Darkness of apostate Nature ; and at the same time consider that *we*, as unworthy as any in the World, have our Lot cast under the clear Sun-shine of the *Gospel*, the *Gospel of Christ, the Gospel of the Kingdom* ; when we consider what Multitudes of Sinners are daily perishing out of the Earth, and drag'd by Devils into the Place of Torments, where they must hear for ever the Shrieks and Wailings of their Partners in Misery, but never once more hear the Voice of Mercy, while *we* are yet reprieved, and still know the joyful Sound ; O how surprizingly great and distinguishing does the Compassion of God to us appear ! --- Let us take Care to cherish a grateful Sense of our infinite Obligations to God our Saviour, and a just Value for the Privilege we enjoy. Let us prize the *Gospel* for its heavenly

Original, for its intrinsick Glory, & its relative Advantage, count it worthy of all Acceptation, & study to do all possible Honour to it, both in Profession and Practice : believe its Truths, embrace its Promises, and obey its Precepts. Let us be much in *searching the Scriptures daily*, which testify of Christ, and the Kingdom of God. Let the Word of Christ, the Word of the Kingdom, *dwell in us richly*. Let us be *SWIFT to hear*; gladly embracing all Opportunities of hearing the Word ; *instant, in Season, out of Season*. [And here I wou'd take a publick Notice of it with Thankfulness to God, that a Spirit of *Zeal to the House of God* is awakened in many at this Day, as appears by our crowded Assemblies from time to time. O that this *hearing Ear* may be continued, and that we may all have an *understanding Heart !*] Let us *take Heed HOW we hear*. And let us also *take Heed WHAT we hear*. Let us determine *not to know any Thing, save Christ, and him crucify'd ; Christ, and him glorify'd ; the Things concerning Christ, and the Kingdom of God*. These are Things of the highest Dignity, and of everlasting Consequence." These are *the Things of our Peace*. No other Things are worth our Knowledge or Regard in Comparison of these. *What is the Chaff, to the Wheat ? saith the Lord*. What is the Knowledge of the World, Insight into Politicks, or into the Springs of Business, Skill in the Mysteries of Trade, and the Arts of thriving and prospering in the World ? Nay, What's all human Learning ? What's the noblest Philosophy ? What's even Scripture-Knowledge itself, in Points of a secular Aspect, or a civil Concern, of a ritual Nature, or external Reference ? It's all to be accounted but as Dross and Dung, *for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ, and the Things of Christ, his Kingdom, and his Righteousness !*

O let us all bewail our many practical Contempts of these excellent Things. Let impenitent Sinners very often and very solemnly expostulate with themselves, *How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation ! --- And forget not the Exhortation, Beware lest that come upon you, which is written in the Prophet, Behold, ye Despisers, and wonder, and perish ! --- As you have any Care for your Souls, despise not the Gospel : nor despise the plain and faithful*

faithful Preaching of the Gospel. *Quench not the Spirit: Despise not Prophesying.* If any are under Convictions, inquiring *what you must do to be saved*, and wou'd not lose your Convictions, nor miss of proper Direction and Assistance, then (I say again) take Heed *what you hear*, as well as *how*. In fixing under a particular Ministry, chuse wisely ; and ever prefer a faithful true *Gospel-Ministry*.

Which leads me to

PRÓP. II. *Ministers of the Gospel are to preach the Kingdom of God, and teach those Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Our Text tells us, the Apostle did so ; tis remark'd of him twice in this Chapter, and often elsewhere : and this is recorded for our *Admonition*, upon whom the Ends of the World are come.--- Here let it be said briefly,

i. We must preach the *Kingdom of God*, revealed in the *Gospel*.

Our Context speaks of *Paul's expounding and testifying the Kingdom of God*. And we read (Chap. 19. 9.) of his *daily disputing, and persuading the Things concerning the Kingdom of God*. Even thus Ministers must labour (every one, as of the Ability, which God giveth) to *testify, and expound, also (if need be) to dispute, and persuade these Things.*

We should *testify* the *Kingdom of God*, asserting its Reality and Existence ; and it will be well, if we are able to *witness unto this from our own happy Experience*. So we must *expound* it, as we are able, in its whole Extent and Compass ; its Nature, its Properties, and Purposes ; the Laws and Benefits of it ; the Promises concerning it ; and the *Truths* relating to it, or inseparably connected with it ; particularly the *Doctrine of Original Sin*, that Truth which is so evidently fundamental to the Scheme of Christianity, and without a due Attention to which we shall be likely to entertain very crude Conceptions of the *Kingdom of God* ; also the *Doctrine of Regeneration*, its Necessity resulting from *Original Sin*, its Author the *Holy Ghost*, its Fruits in the *christian Life*, its essential Connection with eternal Happiness, &c. without a just REGARD to which important Points, we shall have but very Superficial Notions of the *Kingdom of God*. Hence, if we

wou'd expound, as we ought, the Kingdom of God, we should study and preach these great Gospel-Truths. --- We must likewise be ready even to dispute, as the Apostle did, and contend earnestly for the Faith, in regard of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God ; with Meekness and Wisdom instructing such as oppose themselves ; labouring to convince Gainsayers, and put them to Silence. We must contend against all the Enemies of the Kingdom of God ; wrestle against Flesh and Blood, and against spiritual Wickednesses in high Places ; resist the Devil and the World, Vice and Error, in all their various Forms, with the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of Truth. --- And like the Apostle, we must also persuade the Things concerning the Kingdom of God ; reasoning with Men out of the Scriptures, to convince them of the Folly of Rebellion, and the Wisdom of Submission to God ; exhorting and calling Men to a professed Subjection, and Obedience to the Gospel : as Paul shewed to the Gentiles, that they shou'd repent, and turn to God, and do Works meet for Repentance : He testified both to Jews, and Greeks, Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ : And the Disciples he persuaded to continue in the Grace of God, bringing forth the Fruits of the Kingdom, the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the Praise and Glory of God.

In a Word, we must teach the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost. This enters into the Notion of preaching the Kingdom of God. The adorable Trinity all coⁿcur in the Dispensation of Redemption ; acting each his distinct Part in the Affairs of this Kingdom : and so far as Divine Revelation will carry us, we must testify, expound, and persuade these Things, as Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. We must preach the Father of Mercies and God of all Grace : we must preach the Spirit of Holiness : and we must preach the Lord of Glory. While we remember the Creator, we must never forget the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier : but display their several Glories, and assert their respective Rights. But this brings me to say,

2. We must teach the Things, revealed in the Gospel, concerning our Lord JESUS CHRIST ; those Truths especially

cially that have a near Relation to Christ, his Person and Mediation. So the Apostle did : he preach'd Jesus, and the Resurrection. He preach'd not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord. ---He preached Repentance and Remission of Sins in the Name of Jesus Christ.

Though we are not to confine our Preaching wholly to the Things which in their direct Aspect concern the Lord Jesus Christ ; but may and ought to teach many Things that do but reductively and remotely concern Christ : Yet the special Subject, on which we should often dwell, and very much lay out our Ministry, is Christ, and the Things more immediately concerning Christ. Here must be the Emphasis, the Accent, in our Preaching. We must preach the Things concerning the Name of Jesus Christ : his Person, Natures and Perfections both Divine and Human ; his Messiahship, or mediatorial Character ; his Charge of a peculiar People, chosen in him, and given him of the Father, before the World ; his Mission, and Incarnation in Time ; his Offices, and Execution of them ; his States of Humiliation and Exaltation ; the Authority, Excellency, and Usefulness of his Doctrine & Revelation ; the Reasons of his Obedience and Sufferings ; the Ends of his Resurrection, and Ascension ; his Priestly Intercession in Heaven, his Prophetical Acts, and Regal Administration ; his second Coming and Kingdom, the Resurrection and eternal Judgment. In Sum, his Purchases, his Victories, and Triumphs ; the Benefits of his Salvation, and Value of an Interest in Him ; the Office of his Spirit in the Application of Redemption ; the Necessity and Efficacy of his Righteousness, imputed to us, and received by Faith, in the Business of Justification ; the Necessity and Efficacy also of his Grace, in the Conversion of Sinners, and Perseverance of Saints ; the Stability of the Promises in him ; the exceeding Riches of God's Mercy in and thro' him ; the Greatness and Freeness of his Love, the Obligations of Gratitude we are under to him, and the righteous Claims he has upon us ; ----- the Duties we owe him, and more especially that comprehensive Duty of believing in him, submitting to his Righteousness, and depending on his Grace, living by the Faith of the Son of God, and doing whatsoever we do, whether in Word

or Deed, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ ; in Virtue of his Grace in and with us, in Obedience to his Will, with a Reliance on his Merits, and with an Eye to his Glory ; that the Name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in us, and we in him, according to the Grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let it be subjoined now,

3. We shou'd preach the Kingdom of God, and the Things concerning Christ, both in Conjunction, and in their Relation to one another.

The Ideas are somewhat distinct, yet so united, as mutually to involve one the other : and it seems to me, there's no forming any just Notions of either Subject, without comprising both. While we preach the true Scripture-Doctrine on the one head, we do indeed implicitly teach the other : But it's abundantly best to be explicit, in preaching both together. This is to preach after the Manner of the Apostles, and primitive Ministers, as they were taught of God, and led by the Spirit. (See *Acts* 8. 12. -- *Chap.* 19. 8, 10. and Context ver. 23. with many other Places.) They are the proper Standard of Evangelic Preaching † and it will

† The Gospel indeed at the first began to be spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, in his personal Ministry : But the Confirmation and full Declaration of it was left to his Spirit, speaking by the Mouth of the Apostles, & other inspir'd Ministers, after our Lord's Ascension. Jesus indeed, when he was risen, abode forty Days on Earth, speaking to his Disciples of the Things pertaining to the KINGDOM of God, & expounding to them, in all the Scriptures, the Things concerning HIMSELF : But those Discourses of his, the Holy Ghost hath not been pleas'd to put on Record. And as for his Preaching in the Days of his Flesh, it was very much in Parables, & evidently with a design'd Reserve, as to the Peculiarities of Christianity : But these, after his Ascension, were clearly reveal'd by his Spirit to the Apostles ; & they, with other faithful Men, fully preach'd the Gospel. They are therefore the just Pattern, and adequate Rule of our Preaching : -- See Mr. Jennings's two excellent Discourses, of preaching Christ &c. Edit. N. E. p. 26, 29.

be our Honour, to follow their Example, left on Record for Imitation.---Our Charge is to *preach the Word* : and the Word we preach must be both the *Word of the KINGDOM* and the *Word of the Lord JESUS*. The Things concerning the *Kingdom of God*, and those concerning *Christ* are, as in their Nature reciprocally dependant, so in Revelation inseparably connected : And surely *what God hath joined together, Man may not put asunder.*

It's Pity a Minister shou'd at any time lay the Plan of his Discourse on *one* of these Subjects, so as to *preclude* the other : and much worse it is, if he ever makes a Sermon without any explicit Regard to *either* of them. This (in plainness of Speech) is to *handle the Word of God deceitfully* : and no Apology can in any measure justify such Management.---Every suitable Theme of a Pulpit-Discourse is reducible under one or other of these Heads, improvable to serve the Purposes of both, or capable of receiving Illustration and Enforcement from them. Whatever our *Text* is, the Things of the *Kingdom*, and the Things of *Christ*, may with the utmost Propriety and Pertinence be introduced, either under the *Doctrine*, or the *Application* ; and it will be a most faulty Omission, in any Discourse to pass them wholly in Silence.---The Strain of our Preaching shou'd turn upon *one* or *other* of these Evangelic Subjects : frequently we shou'd consider them *both together*, presenting them in one complex View: and when discoursing on *either* of them more *directly*, yet always remember their *Connection* and mutual Dependance, & accordingly consider the one in its *Reference* and *Subserviency* to the other.

In this Method of Preaching we shall be likely to *declare the whole Counsel of God*, and *not keep back any Thing that is profitable*, whether as to the *Doctrinals* or the *Practicals* of Revelation. --- In this Way we shall lead our Hearers into the most *distinct* and most *consistent* Notions of the Gospel, in the Variety of its rich Contents. --- In this Way, we shall *shew our selves approved unto God*, *Workmen that need not be ashamed*, *rightly dividing the Word of Truth*. --- And this is the Way to *commend our selves unto every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God*, to suit every one's Relish, and to hit every one's Case, in the Multiplicity we have to do with. --- This is the Way to preserve the
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christian Religion in its full and evident *Distinction* from Paganism, Judaism, Mahometism, and every false Religion. This is the Way to keep the Gospel *distinguish'd* from the Law, Faith from Reason, the Graces of Christianity from the Morals of Philosophy, and the Profession of Protestants from that of Papists. --- In this Way we shall be able by sound *Doctrine* both to exhort, and to convince the Gainsayers. This is the Way to remove the *Offence of the Cross*, and to make Christ crucified appear the *Wisdom* and the *Power of God*. ---- This is the Way to keep Professors *sound in the Faith*, and at the same time bring them to be *obedient to the Faith*. --- In short, This is the Way to advance the *Kingdom of God*, and to promote the true *Knowledge of God*, and of Jesus Christ, which is Life eternal.

On the one hand, *Those Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ*, exhibit themselves to us in their strongest, their most beautiful and striking Light, when discoursed in Conjunction with the Things pertaining to the *Kingdom*. When we teach the *Things of the Spirit*, the *Things of the Covenant*, the *Things that be of God*, conjunctly with the *Things of Christ*: When we preach Christ Jesus the *Lord*, and our *Righteousness*; the *Apostle*, and *High-Priest* of our Profession; *Messiah*, the *Prince*; our *Advocate*, and *Judge*; the *Object* of our *Trust and Hope*, & of our *Fear, Love & Obedience*: When we preach both his *Cross*, and his *Crown*; both the *Merits* of his Death, and the *Power* of his Resurrection; both the *Sceptre* of his *Grace*, and the *Rod* of his *Anger*; both his *Doctrine* and *Example*; both his *Promises & Precepts*; both *Remission* of Sins, and *Conversion* thro' his Name; in a Word, both *Repentance* towards God, and *Faith* towards our Lord Jesus Christ: When we thus teach and preach (skilfully harmonizing, tempering and balancing Subjects of such a various Tendency and Aspect) then the *Things which concern Christ* appear in their genuine Light, Excellency and Importance; carry with them the greatest Force of Attraction, and are most likely to reach their practical Ends and Uses. This is to handle the Matter wisely; and they that *win Souls*, are wise. --- But if we confine our Ministry to the sublime *Mysteries* concerning

ing *Christ*, and treat them in a speculative and abstract Manner, exclusively of their practical Inferences, and neglecting the Things pertaining to the Kingdom, we preach the Gospel of Grace in a very *imperfect Manner*, and may promise our selves but a very *imperfect Success*.*--- This is a faithful Saying, and these Things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good Works : these Things are good and profitable unto Men.

On the other hand, if ever the Kingdom of God comes not in *Word* only, but in *Power*, it is when we preach it in Connexion with the Things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ. When consider'd in one View with these Things, it then appears in its true Glory and Lustre, and is preach'd with the most flaming Light, and successful Energy. If we mean to save our own Souls, or theirs which hear us, we must take Heed to ourselves and to our Doctrine, that we teach and live the *Doctrine of Christ*. We must keep the *Faith*, and preach it, pure and entire. Our Mouths must be fill'd with the great Arguments of the *Gospel*; the Principles of the Religion of *Jesus* must reign in our Sermons ; else they'll freeze on our Lips, however warmly we may seem to preach the *Kingdom of God*, in a moral Strain, with a philosophic Turn of Thought. Indeed how can we pretend to be Preachers of the *Gospel*, if we drop the Doctrines, and Duties, of a *supernatural Discovery*? With what Face can we call our selves *Christian Ministers*, if the *Run* of our preaching is upon the Principles and Laws of *Nature* (tho' taken into Christianity) while we consider 'em only under their *natural Form*, under the Notion of meer *Morality*, or *natural Religion*; forgetting that by their being incorporated into the *Gospel*, they have lost that *Respect*, chang'd their *Use* and *End*, put on a *new Form*, and in Effect are turn'd into *Evangelic Principles and Rules*, so that there's (strictly speaking) nothing at all meerly *moral*, nothing purely *natural*, in the *christian Creed or Canon*.--- Sure I am, that to *philosophise* merely, without an Eye to *Revelation*, or to harangue upon *natural Truths and moral Duties*, in a rational

* Jennings, ubi supra, p. 30, 37.

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Way, without reducing them to their proper Place and Use in the *christian Scheme*, and without paying a due Regard to *the Things concerning Christ*, this is not (in the Sense of Scripture) to *preach the Kingdom of God*.--- What tho' the *Text* be taken out of the *Bible*! If the Sermon be in a philosophical and unevangelic Strain, the Preacher might as well have taken his *Text* out of *Seneca's Morals*.--- I deny not, *Morality* is to be preach'd : but then it must be *christian Morality*; a Morality springing from *Faith in Christ*, and animated by *Gospel-Principles and Incentives*, govern'd by *Gospel-Rules*, and directed to *Gospel-Ends*. *Repentance* is to be preach'd, but it must be ^{such as is} excited by *looking upon Him whom we have pierced*. And *Obedience* is to be preach'd, but it must be the *Obedience of Faith*. A *good Conversation* is to be recommended ; but it must be a *good Conversation in Christ*.-- The *Law* is to be taught : but then it must be the *Law* as exhibited in *reveal'd Religion* ; and so taught, as that it may do the Office of a *Schoolmaster* in bringing *Sinners to Christ*, and the Part of a *Guide* in conducting *Saints* through the Paths of moral Duty. *The Law is good, if a Man use it lawfully*, and teach it wisely. By the *Law* is the *Knowledge of Sin* : it is improvable to awaken *Sinners* by the *Terror of the Curse*, to humble 'em by the *Sense* of their own *Depravity* and spiritual *Impotence*, to drive 'em out of their *false Confidences*, and compel them to seek an *Interest in Christ*, by a *Sense* of their absolute *Need* of his *Righteousness and Grace* : And the *Law* is of Use also to the *Believer*, for the *Direction* of his moral *Carriage*, for the preserving his *Humility*, and keeping him ever *dependant upon Christ*.--- With such Views as these, the *Law* is to be taught : and these *Uses* of it are to be kept carefully in our own and our Hearers Eye. Whenever we teach the *Law*, we must still send Men to *Christ*, for *Righteousness and Strength*, for the *Justification of Life*, & for the *Sanctification of the Spirit* : ever guarding our more moral Discourses with proper Cautions against false Ends and false Measures of Obedience, and enforcing all our practical Exhortations by the Principles and Motives of the *Gospel*.

Why shou'd not we introduce the *Things concerning Christ*,
on

on all Occasions, as well as the *Apostles* † who manifestly delight to bring in these *Evangelic Peculiarities*, whatever Argument they are upon ? If our *Notions* of Christianity are such as forbid our doing this, or if our *Temper* be such as don't dispose us to it, 'tis justly to be fear'd we are in a *different Scheme*, or else of a *different Spirit*, from that of the *Apostles*.--- Methinks, it looks as if we were *asham'd* of the *Gospel*, in its peculiar Discoveries; if we are silent on these Heads. Or can we think to excuse our Silence, by pretending that these Things are liable to be *wrested* by *unlearned and unstable Souls* to their own *Destruction* ! But surely this is a Caution, which the *Apostles* have set us no Pattern of. Though they knew, Men of *corrupt* Minds actually did and wou'd still *pervert* the *Gospel* to their own *Ruin*, yet they *fully* and faithfully preach'd it, and run all Ventures. So must we, if we wou'd, as becomes us, shew all good *Fidelity*: and indeed if we wou'd hope for any good *Success*. For upon what reasonable Grounds can we look for the *Presence* of Christ with our Sermons, if there be an *Absence* of Christ in them ; if his *Person & Mediation*, his *Sacrifice* and his *Spirit* be not allow'd a Place in them, or are only complemented with an occasional and cursory *Hint*, when they ought to be the *reigning Topicks*, and live on our Lips continually ?--Can we deem it our Glory, to neglect these *Evangelic Themes*, and act the *Jewish Doctor*, or the *Pagan Philosopher* in a *christian Pulpit*, by preaching up *Works* without *Grace*, or *Virtue* without *Faith*, when we are assur'd that it is *by Grace we are sav'd thro' Faith* ! Can we hope for a Divine *Blessing* to attend us in such a Way of preaching ? No. * If we banish the *Things concerning Christ* out of our *Divinity*, or treat them with a cold Neglect, our Preaching

† See this Point debated by Dr. Watts, *H. At.* p. 40, &c.

* Mr. Jennings thinks, " *GOD'S Honour is concerned to blast these Maimers of the Gospel.* (ubi supra, p. 25.) And Dr. Watts solemnly admonishes such to " *lay down the Ministry, as likely to waste their Breath in vain Declamations, and have a terrible Account to give at the last Day.* Humb. Attempt. p. 48.

will most probably be in vain: Yea, tho' in preaching the Kingdom of God, after our legal or moral Manner, we may speak as with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, so artfully and strongly; yet in the Event we shall be but as sounding Brass, and a tinkling Cymbal, that makes an empty Noise, and useless Musick. Verily, tho' we speak with all the Force of natural Reasoning, with all the Beauties of Eloquence, and with all the Arts of Elocution and Address superadded, with all the Light and Fire and Skill in the World, we shall never be likely to make a real effectual Conquest of any one Soul, to add to the Lord, and to enlarge the Kingdom of God. † Indeed we may perhaps move the Conscience, and melt the Passions of a Sinner; but that's a very different Thing from the pricking his Heart, the subduing his Will, and conquering his Lusts. We may obtain to reform a little his Temper and Manners; which is but a very defective Success, and to little Purpose, without softning his Heart, and bringing him to Newness of Life. In such a Way of dealing with the Sinner, we are never like to prevail on him, truly to humble himself, and bow to God's Authority, as his willing People do; but rather shall flatter the Pride and Naughtiness of his Heart, nourish the Pharisee in him, the Spirit of Self-Righteousness and Self-sufficiency, so natural to him; and thus unhappily promote his falling into the Condemnation of the Devil, rather than further him in the Way of Salvation.---Nay, "It hath justly been observ'd, that where a great and universal Neglect of preaching Christ hath prevail'd in a christian Nation, it hath given a fatal Occasion to the Growth of Deism and Infidelity." *---So far is

[†] See Dr. Watts's H. Attempt, p. 37,--39. 81,--83.

^{*} See Mr. Jennings's two Discourses, p. 30, 37, 38. With Dr. Watts's Pref. p. 2.---See also the Dr.'s H. At. p. 46,

47. And see Dr. Wm. Sherlock's 2d Vol. of Ser. p. 222, 324, 364, 365, 388. where the Zeal of some Modern Christians for natural Religion and Morality (without a due Regard to Christ and Faith) meets with many just Rebukes, and is loaded with the Imputation of being the grand Cause of the Infidelity and Deism of the Age.

such

such moral unspiritual and unevangelical Preaching from having an actual Influence, or probable Tendency, to advance the *Kingdom of God*, in the Scripture-Notion of it. *

* I think, I cou'd readily direct an Inquirer where he may find many *Sermons*, that run to a faulty Excess upon a *philosophic Strain*. And for the sake of the *Subject*, so near akin to that we are upon, I will single out Dr. *TILLOTSON*'s two Discourses on *Matth. 6. 33.* which tho' perhaps less censurable than many other of his Sermons, yet have a Variety of exceptionable Strokes in them, and among other culpable Omissions, are remarkable for *this One Thing* lacking in 'em, a Regard to *the Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ*.-- The *single, cold and casual Hint*, at the Close of the latter Sermon, relating to the *Merits of Christ*, I think bro't in but after an *odd Way*. ---- However, I mean by this, only to note how very *defectively* he has treated that *particular Text*.-- I think it a pertinent Remark of Dr. *Sherlock* (who seems in his advanced Age to have very much reformed his Scheme in Theology) "That this is the *greatest Thing* of all in the Religion of a *Sinner*, to know by what Means to *reconcile God*, & obtain the *Forgiveness of Sin*; and if mere *Nature* cannot certainly teach us *this*, all the *rest* that it teaches us, is of very little Use to *Sinners*.--" Some wise & good Men (*says he*) have insisted very much upon the Distinction between *natural* and *reveal'd Religion*, with a very *honest Design*; but without being aware of the *ill Consequences of it*.-- So he proceeds to shew how *Socinianism* is grafted upon it, and *Deism* at length springs from it. [Vol. 2. p. 311, 325: &c.]-- It's a good Observation of the famous Professor *Frank*;-- "The bringing Sinners to *CHRIST* shou'd be in some measure the Design and Drift of *every Sermon* a Minister preaches; so that if a Person shou'd happen to hear him but *once* in all his Life, he might, even by means of that *one Sermon*, get some Notion of *the one Thing needful*, and be just enter'd at least into the Way of Salvation.-- See Appendix to Mr. *Jennings*'s two Discourses, p. 75.

When ever then we attempt to preach the Kingdom of God, we must not content ourselves with picking out the more practical Texts of Scripture, and handling moral Precepts in an abstract Way, without a just Reference to the Things concerning Christ. No, but it must ever be remembred, that Christ is the Foundation and Head of the Kingdom, the great Origin of its Laws and Blessings. So One speaks ; "Christ is the chief Corner-Stone (upon which the whole depends, both as to its Strength and Beauty) tho' so much set at Nought by our modern Builders." For whose Conduct he accounts in this Manner : "The practical Commands of the Gospel are too excellent, the Justice of them too evident, for the Devil to attack them : But still, while he artfully allows the Excellence of the Morality of the Gospel, he endeavours to cut away the chief Props and Supports of it, to overthrow the noblest Motives of our Gratitude, Love and Obedience, by seducing Men to Infidelity, or Indifference, about the Fundamentals of the Christian Faith : And accordingly in all Ages, even to this Day (says he) they that deny the Divinity of the Son of God, & that strike deepest at the very Foundations of Christianity, or are the most cold & indifferent about them, still talk the loudest of Morality." † Truly by leaving the peculiar Doctrines of the Religion of Christ out of our Ministrations, we give a mighty Advantage to the great Adversary of Souls : For the Sword of the Spirit is the Word of Jesus. The Truths of the Gospel are the main Weapons of our spiritual Warfare, mighty thro' God to the pulling down of strong Holds.--- The Kingdom of God stands on the Pillar of TRUTH. It is establish'd and advanc'd in the World by bearing Witness unto the TRUTH, the Truth as it is in Jesus. This our Lord intimates in his Reply to Pilate's Question (upon Occasion of his having said, My Kingdom is not of this World) Art thou a KING then? Jesus answer'd, To this End was I born : And for this Cause came I into the World, that I should bear Witness unto the

† Dr. J. Adams (Chapl. in ord. to Q. Ann) Ser. on Rev. 2.-10.

TRUTH. Every one that is of the TRUTH, heareth my Voice. (John 18. 37.) In like manner Christ's Messengers are to bear Witness unto the Truth. That's their Character, *Fellow-Helpers unto the TRUTH*; and in being such, they are *Fellow-Workers unto the Kingdom of God*.

If we wou'd approve ourselves as the Ministers of God, it must be (among other Things) by the Word of Truth. We must testify the Gospel of the Grace of God; the great Truths of the Gospel relating to the Work of Grace in Redemption; the Grace of God in the Purpose, the Grace of Christ in the Purchase, & the Grace of his Spirit in the Application of it. This is Preaching. And it carries a Light & Power with it, beyond all philosophical Argument and Persuasive, to promote the Conviction and Conversion of Sinners, and so to promote the Kingdom of God. If ever we mean to have Sinners conquer'd, and effectually subdued to God, we must bring them the Testimony of Jesus, in the Word of Truth; proclaim the Gospel-Report concerning Christ & the great Salvation: And if once they come to receive the Witness of God, to believe the Truth upon Divine Testimony, and entertain the Gospel, not as the Word of Man, but as indeed the Word of God, Then it's like to Work in them effectually, to their being translated out of the Kingdom of Darkness, into the Kingdom of God. If God hath from the beginning chosen them to Salvation, it is thro' Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth, whereto He calleth them by the Gospel, to the obtaining of the Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.--When therefore we attempt to preach the Kingdom of God, we must never forget the Sanctification of the SPIRIT: But apply to Him our selves for his sanctifying Influences to rest on us, and to accompany our Labours for the Good of Souls; and we must send our Hearers to Him, teaching them to depend on his renewing Grace, and to pray for it; frequently opening the Nature of Conversion, and the Necessity of being born again, if they hope to see the Kingdom of God.-- As the Belief of the Truth, in this Point, is of singular Importance, we should endeavour to have them instructed and established well in the Doctrine of Regeneration, together with that other it is grounded upon, the Doctrine of Original Sin.

Let

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Let me add, Another most necessary Point to be often insisted on, is the Doctrine of *Justification* by imputed Righteousness, even the Righteousness of God, without the Law. Among all those Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, and by testifying of which the Kingdom of God is advanced in the World, this is one very eminent Article, That Christ is the Lord our Righteousness ; that Christ is the End of the Law for Righteousness to every one which believeth ; That as by one Man's Disobedience many were made Sinners, so by the Obedience of One (the second Adam) many are made righteous ; that thro' the Name of Jesus, whosoever believeth in him, receives Remission of Sins, and the Justification of Life.--- This Truth is the grand Basis and Support of the Kingdom of God. Indeed, what is the Kingdom of God, in its subjective Notion, but this great Truth bro't home to the Soul, powerfully apply'd, and producing its genuine Effects ? Hence the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, might well be put in Conjunction, as the one Object of our first Pursuit.--- This Truth is the main Subject of the Testimony of Jesus : to this gave all the Prophets and all the Apostles Witness.--- "This Truth is that wherein the Stamp of Divine Authority on Scripture-Revelation is chiefly manifest. All the Parts of Revelation depend on this, and are connected with it ; so that, take away this Truth (concerning Christ delivered for our Offences, and raised again for our Justification) take this out of the Gospel, it will be another Gospel, and the whole Doctrine of both Testaments will be utterly made of none Effect. This therefore is the great Touchstone for the Trial of true and false Doctrine.--- The Name whereby Christ is called among the Subjects of his Kingdom is that, The Lord our Righteousness. That's the Motto of the Christian Church, whereby it's distinguish'd from all other Societies."--- This is peculiarly the characteristic Truth of the Gospel, whereby Christianity is conspicuously differenc'd from the Religion of Nature, & from all false Religions.--- This Truth exhibits the Substance of those ancient Types in the Religion of the Jews, and is the Foundation of the Promises made to the Fathers.--- This Truth (whatever any Enemies of the Cross of Christ may pretend) does

does not make void the Law, but establish it : declaring all Righteousness fulfilled by our Surety, and being a powerful Principle of Obedience in the Believer.--This *Truth* signally contributes to illustrate the Wisdom and Grace of God in Redemption, and to display the Grace & Glory of Christ the Redeemer. --- This *Truth* is the prime Encouragement of the Saint's Hope, and affords the first and great Relief to Sinners under the Spirit of Bondage. 'Tis the *Truth*, in this main Point especially, that makes them free.---In a-Word, "This *Truth* is the great *Mean*, whereby God puts forth his Power to save Sinners, and subjects them to Him in his *Kingdom*. It was by the *Revelation* of Christ's Righteousness in the Gospel, that the *Kingdom* of God our Saviour was at first set up and advanced in the World : and it was by the *Revival* of this great Truth, after it had been buried under Anti-christ's Reign, that the Lord began to consume that wicked one. --- The Strength of Christ's Kingdom, and its Safety, lies in this great Truth : So that they who wou'd advance his Kingdom, must bear this *Truth* about with them, in their Hearts, in all their Preaching, and in all their Conversation. And truly this wou'd be a Spring of daily Refreshment to themselves, and of great Liberty and Boldness in all the Labours of the Gospel-Ministry, and in all the Sufferings that attend it. *

Which brings us to our last general Head.

PROP. III. Ministers may well, and ought to, preach and teach these Things *with all Confidence*.

The Story of the Apostle Paul acquaints us, that he began and finish'd his Ministry with a noble Fortitude, speaking boldly in the Lord, speaking the Gospel of his God with much *Contention*, and with all *Confidence*.: "As one who was himself well assur'd of the *Truth* of what he preach'd, that it was what he durst stand by, & of the *Wrath* of it, that it was what he durst suffer for." He preach'd with Confidence too of Success, and of his own Safety, and of a future Reward.---Herein he is an instructive Example.

* The Words of Mr. Glass, a Minister lately silenc'd in Scotland, for professing Congregational Principles. See his Discourse on John 18: 37.--page 204, &c.

And if we have the Spirit of this Apostle, we also shall *preach and teach with all holy Confidence*.---I put in this qualifying Word, because there is a Confidence that's *faulty*; the Result of Ignorance and Rashness, and a Sign of Pride and Presumption; highly unbecoming in a *Minister* above all Men. But still there's a Confidence that is gracious, meek, humble; both an Ornament and Help, and therefore an important Requisite in a Preacher. 'Tis the *Fruit of the Spirit*, the Result of inward vital Experience. Ministers that have *felt* the *Power* of the Gospel on their own Hearts; that have themselves been *experimentally* taught the *Kingdom of God*, and the *Things of Christ*; such, I say, will have a proportionable *Boldness in the Faith*. They will neither be cold, nor cowardly Preachers: but will usually teach these Things with a holy Confidence, Vigour and Warmth; with a certain *Parrhesia*, Liberty, Skill, and Force; something like the heroic *Paul*; or like *Stephen*, a Man full of Faith, who spake with a *Wisdom and Spirit*, that his *Adversaries could not withstand*.

We shou'd every one make it our Aim, and our Concern, that we may be able, upon the Grounds and Motives of Experience, to preach the Gospel of *Jesus* with *all Confidence*:---With *Confidence* of the Divine Authority, Truth and Excellency of the *Christian Revelation*; also, with *Confidence* in the *Promise* of Christ's gracious Presence with us, in his *Providence*, to watch over us, and by his *Spirit*, to assist and succeed us; and with *Confidence* in his *Righteousness*; to procure our Acceptance and Reward. Verily, if our Hearts condemn us not, we may thus have *Confidence toward God*.---But then there's also a *Confidence* towards *Men*, which becomes us in our sacred *Ministrations*. We must take Heed, that the *Fear of Man* be not a *Snare* to us, and that a false Modesty don't influence us to betray or conceal the Truths of the Gospel, to *walk in Craftiness*, to do the Work of the Lord *deceitfully*, or in any Regard to fail of making *full Proof* of our *Ministry*. We must speak, *not as pleasing Men*, but *God which trieth our Hearts*: and look that we be *not ashamed of Christ, or of his Words*, however sinful and adulterous a Generation our Lot may be cast among. We must approve ourselves *good Soldiers of Jesus Christ*, quit ourselves

selves like Men, and be strong ; strong in the Grace which is in Christ Jesus ; strong in Faith ; strong in Spirit ; boldly exerting our best Powers in the Service of the Gospel ; in nothing ashamed of it, and in nothing terrify'd by its Adversaries ; but willing(if God please)even to resist unto Blood, above the Fondness of Life, and the Fear of Death. Let him that speaketh, speak as the Oracles of God ; that is, as they instruct us, and as becomes them, with Gravity, with Humility, and yet with all Authority, and with all Confidence, with all Plainness, and all Boldness of Speech ; lifting up our Voice like a Trumpet, in reproving and exhorting ; never ashamed, never afraid.---In a Word, we shou'd preach as Men alive, and in Earnest, with a bold-spirited Zeal, with a Heart warmly engag'd in our Master's Cause, deeply affected with Compassion to Souls, and thorowly concern'd for our own, as knowing that ere long we must give an Account.

All this seems imply'd in the Confidence, recommended to us by the Example in our Text. And surely when we consider whose we are and whom we serve, and what it is we preach, and for what Ends, this is enough to inspire us with Life and Courage, to inflame our Affections, to animate our Utterance, and make us preach and teach with all Confidence.---Alas, while the Teachers of Error, & the Teachers of Sin, put on a bold Front, and exert themselves with Vigour, shall we that are set for the Defence of the Gospel, be lukewarm, or pusillanimous !---Have we not seen the happy Success of this Apostolic Zeal and Confidence ? Have we not sometimes beheld the most rampant Vice, and the Spirit of Error, bold as it is, strangely crouch and sneak before the Word of Jesus, plainly and powerfully preach'd, with a humble and zealous Confidence ? ---And if we hold fast the faithful Word, and hold the Beginning of our Confidence steadfast to the End, shall we not have the Comfort of Hope, in Life and in Death, and Boldness in the Day of Judgment ? Yea, we shall have Confidence amidst the Terrors of a dissolving World, and not be ashamed before the Son of Man at his Appearing.

What remains now, but some brief Exhortations, agreeable to the general Scope of this Discourse ?

USE I. Let what has been said, be apply'd by us, to raise our Thôts of the Kingdom of God, and the Things concerning Christ, and to direct us in forming worthy Ideas of them.

The Jews expected, the Kingdom of the Messiah wou'd be a *Temporal* one : and the Disciples themselves were difficultly bro't to shake off their old Jewish Prejudice ; nay, Christians to this Day are apt to entertain too carnal and gross Conceptions of it. But let us remember, Our Lord assures us, that *his Kingdom is not of this World* : and that *it cometh not with Observation* ; for behold, says he, *the Kingdom of God is within you*. It is not a Terrene Kingdom ; it shines not in worldly Pomp, but in a Celestial Beauty. Its Rise and Progress is not after the manner of earthly Kingdoms, with mighty Noise, Ostentation, and outward Shew : but it has its secret Subsistence in the Soul, makes a silent Entrance, and its Glory is invisible to the bodily Eye.--Indeed, in a Sense it may be said to *come with Observation*, especially in some Cases, when usher'd in by a remarkable Train of preparatory Convictions, when making an illustrious Progress, and displaying it self in very triumphant spiritual Victories and Successes, drawing Attention and exciting Admiration. --- In a Sense it may be said to have an *external Shew*, as outward Means, the Word and Ordinances, under the Conduct of the Spirit, are employ'd in the Administration of it ; and as the *Kingdom of God*, when it comes with *Power*, always produces observable Effects in the outward Life.---But still it must ever be kept in Mind, that its Seat is in the *hidden Man*, its principal Operations are *unseen*, and its Glory lies all in *Spirituals*.---How great is the Mystery of this Kingdom ! How transcendent its Dignity and Benefit ! Let us maintain high and honourable Conceptions of it. And as those that have a rais'd Opinion of its Worth and Advantages, let us wish its Prosperity, its extensive Spread thro' all the Earth, and its more flourishing State where it is. That must be our daily fervent Petition, *Thy Kingdom come.*

And let it be remember'd, that the Things concerning Christ are related to this Kingdom, and contribute to advance it. The Foundation, the Security, the Genius of this Kingdom, is *Truth*, the Truth as in Jesus.--- The Doctrine

of Christ is a Doctrine according to Godliness. Let us value it for its practical Tendency, as well as Divine Sublimity. Let us search for Knowledge in this, as for hid Treasures. Let our own and others Ignorance and Slight of these Things be the Matter of our mournful Regret : and let it be for a Lamentation, that there is in general no greater Appearance of the Kingdom of God, and of a Regard to the Things of Christ, prevailing among us. But what Tokens for Good may be seen at this Day, in some hopeful Beginnings among our selves, and the Tidings of Joy we have from other Parts, both in Europe & America, these challenge our thankful Notice.

USE 2. Let what has been said, be apply'd by way of Incentive and Direction in the great Duty of Self-Examination.

What will it profit, my Brethren, to have the Kingdom of God, and the Things that concern Christ, preach'd to us, unless we have experienc'd indeed the inward and vital Dispensation hereof by the Spirit of Grace ! Let us be willing then to come to the Light, and bring our selves to the Test.

Have we ever had a thorow Conviction of our miserable State by Nature ? Been made to see and bewail our Fall in Adam, and to know the Plague of our own Heart ? To see our selves under the Power of Satan and the Rule of Sin, hateful to God, and under the Curse of his Law ? To see the absolute Necessity of a Change of our State ? To see our utter Impotence to deliver our own Souls, and our utter Unworthiness of Divine Relief ?--- And has this View of our wretched Case had its genuine Influence, to humble our Pride, and bring us to abhor ourselves ?--- Have we beheld the Majesty of God, and been persuaded by the Terrors of the Lord, to throw our selves at the Foot of sovereign Mercy ?-- Have we as in a Glass beheld the Glory of Christ, heard his Voice and seen his Shape at any Time ? Have we heard Him speaking to our inner Man, searching the Secrets of it, and instructing our very Reins ? While the external Word has been sounding in our Ears, has the even been an inward Word spoken to our Hearts, making them even burn within us ?--- Has the Spirit, whose Office it is to glorify the Son, taken of the Things of Christ, and shewn them

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them to us ? -- Are we of the Truth, on the Side & under the Power of Truth, the Truth which came by Jesus Christ ? -- Have we felt the Love of Christ constraining us, to submit ourselves to his Righteousness, and his Yoke ; to receive Him in all his Offices, and for all his Benefits ; to prize Communion with Him ; to love his Image, wherever we see it ; to follow his Example, obey his Will, and seek his Glory ; and long to dwell in our Master's Joy, free from all Sin, as well as Sorrow, and perfect in Holiness for ever ?

Let Conscience give a faithful Answer to these Questions. Let us expostulate with our selves in solemn manner ; at the same time depending on, and imploring the Aids of the blessed Comforter : and let us employ our utmost Caution, that we ben't deluded, by groundless Presumptions, into a false Peace in this World, and eternal Perdition in the next. O what an awful Thing will it be for us, when we've been flattering ourselves with Dreams of the Kingdom of God, to find our selves at last in the Kingdom of Darkness ! to sink from the Views and Hopes of Heaven, into the Horror and Despair of Hell ! Amazing will be the Disappointment : and ten fold, yea ten thousand fold the Torment ! --- If a Man thinketh himself Something, while he is Nothing, he deceiveth himself. The grossest Folly ! -- O let us take Care that we ben't found amongst those Fools in Israel.

USE 3. Let Ministers be reminded of the Lessons of Duty taught them by the Example in our Text.

We also are sent to preach the Kingdom of God and the Things concerning Christ. -- These were the exalted Themes of the inspir'd Apostle's Ministry. -- These are Things which the Angels desire to look into. The Psalmist, when in the Spirit musing upon them, tho't his Heart was inditing good Matter, & when he spake of the Things which he had made touching the King, his Tongue was as the Pen of a ready Writer. Surely these are Things every way worthy to be study'd and preach'd. --- Such Preaching is eminently suited to the Gospel-Dispensation, its Spirit and Design, and to the End of our Ministry, the Glory of Christ, in the Conversion and Edification of Souls ; peculiarly adapted to the Wants of Sinners, and to the Gust of Saints. --- Let us therefore, my Fathers and Brethren, be careful to lay out our Labours in

in the Word and Doctrine, on these great and important Subjects. Let none have Occasion to complain, that *of the Matter of the Kingdom we told 'em not*, or that we ceased to preach and teach Jesus Christ.--- Sad it is, if any of us have been wanting here, or if we need to have *the Way of the Lord expounded even to our selves more perfectly*. O let us meditate on these Things, and give our selves wholly to them, that our profiting may appear unto all.--- Let them fill our Sermons; and not merely be drag'd in, to make a sort of eccentric and glimmering Appearance now and then. We shou'd take the Gospel for our *Vade Mecum*. *Let the Dead bury their Dead : but go thou, and preach the Kingdom of God.* Go forth in the Strength of the Lord, and make Mention of his Righteousness, even of his only.--- These Things let us preach and teach with all Confidence; with all humble Confidence internal towards God, and external towards Men. We have the Example of the Apostle, to countenance and quicken us.

And I can't forbear observing here, We have in a fresh Instance seen this Pauline Spirit and Doctrine remarkably exemplify'd among us. We have seen a Preacher of Righteousness, fervent in Spirit, teaching diligently the Things of the Lord, ceasing not even daily to preach the Kingdom of God, and the Things concerning Christ; and this with all Confidence. May I not say, that the Gospel he preach'd, came not unto us in Word only, but in Power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much Assurance? For your selves, Brethren, know his Entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain!--- And as for us, we have been surpriz'd--- We have been pleas'd-- And shall we not now strive to imitate!-- As every Man hath received the Gift, so let him minister the same. And as we've been put in Remembrance, let us stir up the Gift of God in us.--- Brethren, pray for us.

USE 4. Let what has been said, recommend to all of you, the diligent Study and delightful Contemplation of these Things.--- Surely, the Matter of our Preaching is worthy to be the Matter of your Meditation. I might enforce this Duty by a Variety of Considerations.--- And I had tho't here to direct the Exhortation to our Candidates for the Pulpit. As you wou'd be Fellow-Helpers with us, Resolve

solve that thro' Grace you will be the Students and the Preachers of CHRIST, his Kingdom, and his Righteousness. † But I forbear.

USE 5. Let the *Children of the Kingdom* endeavour to strengthen the Hands of the *Ministers* of the Kingdom ; doing nothing to abate our holy *Confidence*, or to hinder the *Gospel*, but *helping together* by your Prayers, your Counsels, and Examples. Let us see you both exemplarily attending and profiting by our Labours. So shall we thank God, and take Courage. --- Be ye also bold in your Profession, and resolute in your Practice of Christianity, adorning the *Doctrine of God* your *Saviour* in all Things. --- Rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no Confidence in the Flesh. Rejoice and fear not, because it's your Father's good Pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Adore electing Love, redeeming Mercy, and renewing Grace : And walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his Kingdom and Glory. Remember, it is a Kingdom of Holiness ; and live under its Restraints, live by its Rules. Mourn your Defects. Grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of Christ. Pity and pray for Christless graceless Sinners. Be concerned in particular for those under your Family-Charge, that the Kingdom of God may be formed in their Souls, that Christ may dwell in their Hearts by Faith ; that your dear Lord may be known and honoured in your Families. --- I leave with you that excellent Portion of Scripture, for the Exercise of your retir'd Tho'ts, 2 Pet. i.

And now in the last Place,

USE 6. Let me exhort such among you as are yet in your Sins, to give an earnest Heed to the Things which you have heard.

I hope, none of you will act as if I had been merely amusing you with a tedious Discourse on insignificant Impertinences, and treat it accordingly with Coldness & Neglect. Surely, the Kingdom of God, and the Things concerning Christ, are not Matters of empty Speculation, to be

† See the venerable aged Mr. Wm. Williams's excellent Sermon on Col. 4. ii. (at Anniv. Conven. Min.) p. 20.
made

made a Jest of, nor Matters of Indifference, to be trifled with. No, assure your selves, they are Things of the highest practical Concern, and of infinite Moment, in which your Souls and your everlasting Interests are deeply involv'd. Let none of you then be careless forgetful Hearers. Apply what has been said, to excite in you a just Solicitude, that you may be found obeying that Call of our Saviour, Matth. 6. 33. *Seek first the KINGDOM of God and his RIGHTEOUSNESS.*---Understand the Expressions as equivalent to those in our Text.

It's the Kingdom of God, which is within Men, and the Righteousness of God, which is by Faith of Jesus Christ, that is the proper Object of the Sinners first Pursuit. These are Blessings of the first Importance ; they demand your first Thought and Care, and must be obtain'd, as ever you hope for future eternal Happiness. If you are not in Christ, and have not him of God made unto you Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, you are undone for ever. The Kingdom of God must be set up in your Souls, by the Operation of regenerating Grace ; or you have no possible Meetness for the heavenly Inheritance. And the Righteousness of God our Saviour, that everlasting Righteousness, which he bro't in by his Obedience unto the Death, must be upon you, unto the Justification of Life, through Faith in Christ ; or you have no possible Title to Heaven and Blessedness, but must die in your Sins, and be herded among unpardon'd Devils for ever.--- Think not to spin a Righteousness for your selves, by any Works that you can do : It will prove but a Spider's Webb, and not hide the Shame of your Nakedness. If you are Enemies of the Cross of CHRIST, your End will be Destruction. Take Warning from that of Christ to the self-righteous Pharisees, --- Verily I say unto you, Publicans and Harlots enter into the Kingdom of God before you. And I again, Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God, as a little Child, shall in no wise enter therein. You must be humbled, and bro't to lie abas'd at the foot of sovereign Grace, to submit to the Righteousness of God ; or you cannot receive the Kingdom of God : and if you don't receive the Kingdom of God in this World, the Kingdom of Hell must inevitably be your Portion in the next.---But if you

receive the *Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, this will secure to you compleat and eternal Blessedness. How worthy then are these of your first Concern, and most earnest Pursuit !---O that we cou'd see in our Day the fulfilling of that Scripture, *The Kingdom of God is preached, and every Man presseth into it !** Hear, all ye Inhabitants of Zion, Young and Old, High and Low, Rich and Poor together ! O let all agree in making this your prime Care, Aim, and Desire, That you may receive the *Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*.--- Mind the *Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek Righteousness*; yet not as *Israel* sought it, *as it were by the Works of the Law*. But knowing that a *Man is not justified by the Deeds of the Law, but by the Faith of Jesus Christ*, be concern'd that you may have it given you to believe, with the Heart to believe unto Righteousness; that being justified by Grace, you may be Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life. --- But take Heed, lest while ye seek to be justified by Christ, ye yourselves be found Sinners, unrenewed, & vain Pretenders to the Faith of Christ. Remember, the *Kingdom of God and his Righteousness* are join'd in the Gospel, and dispensed in Connexion. You have both, or you have neither. Make them therefore the joint-Object of your first Pursuit. Be equally sollicitous for Pardon and Conversion, for the *sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus*, and for the *Washing of Regeneration*.---Be waiting at the Posts of *Wisdom's Doors*, attending the Means of Grace, *in Season, out of Season*, with earnest unceasing Prayer, that you may win Christ, and be found in him; that the *Kingdom of God* may be implanted within you, and his *Righteousness* apply'd to you.---Let such as are at *Ease in Zion*, awake out of their Security, lest the Doom be passed upon them, *He*

* On the preceeding Lecture we were entertain'd (by Mr. Cooper) with a very seasonable and excellent Sermon from those Words: which occasion'd my being so brief in this last Exhortation. Otherwise I shou'd have left Room for the proper Enlargements here, and have gone into various distinct Addresses.

that is filthy, let him be filthy still.—And let such as are under Convictions, be looking diligently lest they fail of the Grace of God, and lest they be of them whieh draw back unto Perdition.—And let us all that have received the Kingdom of God, in the reveal'd Model and outward Dispensation, and have receiv'd his Righteousness in external Profession, attend to that solemn Exhortation of the Apostle, with which I conclude, Heb. 12. 28, 29. *Wherefore we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have Grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with Reverence and godly Fear. For our God is a consuming Fire.*

FINIS.



